

## **Ohio bill would require abuse education in schools**

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### **Body**

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Pending **Ohio** legislation would **require** school districts to teach students the dangers of abusive relationships.

If the **bill** is passed into law, the **Ohio** State Board of **Education** would be responsible for creating a policy mandating domestic violence **education**.

Currently, there is no date set for lawmakers to vote on the proposed **bill**.

"The younger the prevention **education** starts, the better," said Amy Howton, sexual assault response coordinator at the University of Cincinnati's Women's Center. "Teen violence rates have been increasing, and it's important to teach teens about abusive behavior."

Tina's Law, the proposed legislation, was introduced to the **Ohio** House by Rep. Sandra Stabile Hardwood.

Although Howton was unfamiliar with the specific legislation, she says **education** is important: Many people don't notice outward forms of **abuse**, such as controlling relationships and isolation.

Statistics show that 25 percent of teens are or have been in an abusive relationship, according to the House of Ruth, a women's shelter in Washington, D.C.

Tina's Law is a proposal resulting from a 1992 murder-suicide incident in which Tina Croucher, an 18-year-old Miami University student, was shot by an ex-boyfriend before he took his own life.

Since her death, Jim and Elsa Croucher, the victim's parents, created Citizens Against Domestic Violence, a non-profit organization promoting the awareness and dangers of domestic **abuse**.

According to their Web site, the Croucher's have reached more than 70,000 high school and college students, raising awareness with their program "Dating Violence 101."

Despite the increasing number of reported abusive relationships among teenagers, it is still an under reported crime.

"People tend to underreport any type of **abuse**, and many don't know what constitutes sexual **abuse**," said Jan Bending, assistant professor of sociology who also runs her own private counseling practice in Blue Ash. "Research indicates the prevalence for **abuse** in intimate relationships of all ages. Both men and women become victims."

When approached, abusers frequently say they were unaware their behavior is abusive, an all too-common instance, Bending said.

Additionally, victims of **abuse** might reconcile with an abusive partner, Bending said.

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Last year, a bill similar to Tina's Law passed unanimously in the Ohio House, but it failed to clear the Senate.

Marie Green, a third-year social work student, said she had a friend who was in an abusive relationship. Although the legislation might not influence all, she sees it as a positive.

"I think it depends on the person though, and whether or not they would listen [to the advice]," Green said. "In some cases, if someone really wants to stay with someone in an abusive situation, then they will, but I think [Tina's Law] will help some cases."

Ohio Attorney General Richard Corday and CADV provide support for the bill.

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